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**READINESS OF FINNISH COMPANIES TO INTEGRATE  
FOREIGN STUDENTS**

**Case Study Of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj**

**Thesis**

**CENTRAL OSTROBOTHNIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED  
SCIENCES**

**Degree Programme in Business Management**

**May 2010**

**ABSTRACT**

<b>CENTRAL OSTROBOTHNIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES</b>	<b>Date</b> 21 May 2010	<b>Author</b> Saka Hakeem Oloruntoyin
<b>Degree programme</b> Degree programme in Business Management		
<b>Name of thesis</b> Readiness of Finnish companies to integrate foreign students: Case study of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj		
<b>Instructor</b> Birgitta Niemi		<b>Pages</b> 45
<b>Supervisors</b> Birgitta Niemi, MA & Antti Porko		
<p>Integration has been a popular discourse among foreign students. The difficulty experienced among international degree students studying in Finland to find internship places and full time employment has been a point in focus. Foreign students are often confined to look outside Finland for employment opportunities having received world-class education. Moreso, there has been a forecast of labour shortage in Finland due to the fact that post World War II baby boomers would be retiring in a few years to come and one way of closing up the vacuum that would be created by the exit of older workers is to attract and retain foreign students in Finland. The question on how ready Finnish companies are to attract and retain foreign students was yet to be researched and this necessitated the choice of the research topic. The thesis focused on the readiness of Finnish companies to attract and retain these diverse pools of foreign students using a Finnish company as a case study. The case study company was Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj which specializes in printing and electronic media. The company has subsidiaries and business operations in Finland and Estonia.</p> <p>Extensive literature review of the concept of integration was carried out. The dimension of diversity which is closely related with the topic was introduced as well as the social aspects of integration. The thesis also dived into benefits of integration and also looked at problems which might constitute barriers to integration of foreign students. Survey, questionnaires and interviews were used in the research. The results emanating from the research showed that Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj is a proponent of integration of foreign students but more still needs to be done in terms of internship and full-time employment of foreign students. This is only one company out of the numerous indigenous Finnish companies and therefore, more studies need to be carried out on other Finnish companies.</p>		
<b>Key words</b> diversity, Finnish companies, foreign students, integration		

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The completion of this research work is one of the many favours of my Lord upon me. My sincere thanks go to my parents, Mr and Mrs K. A. Saka, for their unending parental love and support, prayer and understanding throughout my studies. I appreciate the efforts of my supervisor, Birgitta Niemi whose guidance and support enabled me to do a thorough research. I am also grateful to all my lecturers. I also appreciate the interest shown by the management of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj to use the company as a case study.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to all my colleagues too numerous to mention whose efforts, advice, love, affection made my stay in Finland a pleasant and memorable one. I love you all.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Integration is not a new phenomenon, business corporations are evolving across national and continental boundaries. As such, there is the need to involve people across cultural divides in companies' activities. Immigration and emigration has also expanded the integration process. People have continued to move for the purpose of study, work or tourism and different people are brought together in the process. Finland's labour force is characterized with older workers and the increasing number of pensioners in Finland may eventually result into shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour and this is a source of concern to Finland. Attracting foreign students is one way to address the looming shortage of labour which is expected to be visible in the Finnish economy in coming years. Foreign students come to Finland and in the process, they learn about the country, the people, its culture and are more exposed to the Finnish society than any other group of immigrants. The question on how ready Finnish companies are to integrate them into the Finnish working life still remains unanswered at the moment.

OECD countries are increasingly seeking to attract specialized foreign students, particularly in the field of science and technology, and to facilitate their access to the labour market. The United States, The United Kingdom and Australia have for a long time realized the need to attract foreign students whom after their studies graduate as professionals in their respective fields of studies and help provide skilled labour to these countries. Statistics however show that 'students studying in European countries tend to stay more on a temporary basis than those studying in the United States'. What comes to mind from this statistics is that what incentive is provided for these non-European graduates to stay and work in European countries. International migration of highly skilled workers is on the rise and has emerged as an issue of increased relevance, not just to immigration ministries but also to higher education and research ministries as well as economic ministries (OECD 2002). With particular reference to international students, those who go abroad for studies are often highly motivated and have the desire to succeed. The study programs in most international degree programmes in Finland provide a good basis for the graduates to integrate and function in a multicultural environment. The

question however is, how prepared are Finnish companies to absorb and integrate these motivated foreign nationals into the Finnish working life?

There has been a forecast of labour shortage in Finland, this is as a result of the fact that the post World War II baby boomers are nearing retirement age (Simo, Maarit & Terhi 2009, 1). One source of closing up the forecasted labour shortage is the recruitment of international students into the Finnish labour force. Marita Aho of the confederation of Finnish companies posits that companies must begin to invest in the recruitment of foreign nationals even before the actual shortage of labour. Higher education as a tool to establishing contacts with foreigners is regarded as much more effective. Competition for skilled labour in the developed countries is high and one of the most viable means of filling up the gap expected to be created by the retirement of the post World War II baby boomers is for Finland to train and retain foreign students. Finnish trained graduates are expected to adjust into the Finnish working life better than employees trained in other countries. Nonetheless, there is still room for graduates from other countries to fit into the labour gap as the proportion of foreign students studying in Finland is among the lowest in OECD countries (OECD, 2001).

The number of foreign students in Finland is growing. A rule of thumb is for these students to look for employment after studies. However, foreign students often find it difficult to find employment after studies and are often confined to relocate to their country of origin for work (Valoa: International graduate talent under-exploited in Finland). There has not been much discourse on issues relating to the integration of these diverse pools of graduate talents in Finland. Though much has been emphasized on attracting the Finnish trained graduates of foreign background, there has not been much discourse on whether Finnish firms are ready and working towards integrating this group of people into the Finnish working life. Susanna (2005) has researched into the extent to which seven Finnish software firms have presented diversity on their websites. The extent to which they deal with it internally rather than on their webpages is little or yet to be researched into. Therefore, this thesis is a step towards evaluating the integration readiness of Finnish organizations to attract Finnish trained students of foreign origin into their organizations.



## 1.1 Aim of the Thesis

The thesis attempts to look at integration readiness of Finnish companies as a whole. Specifically, the thesis shall look at what integration entails from the business point and the motivating factors that encourage it. To do this, an attempt is made to introduce the criteria by which a firm is regarded as being integrated from different literatures and also look at costs as well as benefits of an integrated cultural work environment.

In addition, Finland and the Ostrobothnian region is home to a number of immigrants who have come from around the world on the basis of study, family reunion and humanitarian grounds. These people are part of the society and as such need to be integrated into the community. One way of integrating them into the society is the readiness of the host community to create a sense of belonging in them through employment opportunities.

One major criterion that has always been a hindrance to the full integration of these immigrants is the language barrier. However, this has often been overemphasised. Employment opportunities in a way provide a learning atmosphere for immigrants to understand why they need to learn the local language. Nonetheless, these issues highlighted, some local companies have taken the initiative to employ foreign students, one of such companies is Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj. Therefore, this thesis seeks to find out their experience with the foreign students employed in the summer of 2009 and in a way of responses from the company evaluate the performance of the students. The thesis will find out if the company would be willing to open more places for foreign students in terms of internship opportunities, project work as well as part-time and full-time employment opportunities. While students are completing their studies during internship, they would be able to gain work experience which would be valuable for them in Finland after their studies. This will provide a platform for foreign students to contribute positively to the Finnish economy having received high quality education in Finland.

## **1.2 Limitation of the Thesis**

Though the thesis is intended to be a complete and expository one, there are however some numbers of limitation that will set the limit for the research. The thesis is not intended to be a criterion for decision making for the company, rather it mainly focuses on reviewing the readiness of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj to integrate more foreign workforce by way of employing Finnish trained professionals of foreign nationals in its business operations.

From the perspective on which this thesis is written, integration refers to the totality of conditions upon which non-Finnish citizens feel being part of the socio-cultural and economic life of Finland. Finnish companies refer to all establishments of workplace owned by and managed by Finnish government and nationals. Foreign student is any other non-Finnish citizen that is studying towards a degree mainly from outside the European Union and the European Economic area or has graduated from Finnish higher institutions.

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

This research is exploratory in nature in that it tries to find out what integration entails from the business point and barriers to integration. As such, relevant information shall be obtained from study of earlier works on the subject matter. Interviews and questionnaires shall be used to get information from the host company relating to the study. A survey relating to international students in Central Ostrobothnia University of applied sciences relating to the study shall also be carried out

## 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF INTEGRATION

This section of the thesis attempts to lay the background for the general issues that form the basis of the research. Here, the theoretical framework on the concept of integration will be explored from different sources. Integration is not an end itself but a process and a means that ensures the mutual working and understanding among diverse parties. As such, the theoretical framework of the role of knowledge in integration will also be examined in this part of the thesis. Different organizational approaches to integration will be explored from different literature sources and the chapter will conclude with the benefits of integration and a discussion of other issues relating to integration.

### 2.1 Concept of Integration

The word integration is derived from the latin word *integratus* having diverse meanings depending on the contexts. Words such as to coordinate, blend into a functioning or unified whole are among the various meanings which integration may refer to. ‘By referring to integration, we thus mean bringing or joining together a number of distinct things so that they move, operate and function as a harmonious, optimal unit’ (Johanna, Magnus & Kim 2007, 715).

Integration is viewed from different perspectives in the business sense. Different viewpoints on integration exist from various spheres of the business environment. Integration as a project management concept concentrates on combining different parts of production as well as services into a larger one. With regards to project management, there exists technical integration which anchors on integrating different technical solutions for the better working of a whole system. Social integration also exists where strong relationship between suppliers and customers form the basis of achieving a satisfied customer base (Johanna et al. 2007, 716).

Integration in the work place is even of a broader dimension. In today's business environment, there exist differences among the employees in terms of gender, age, educational background, cultural background, socio-economic conditions, skills, talents among other differences that may exist. This brings to limelight the need to bring all these differences to work for the overall benefit of the company. Harald & Lise (1995, 9) argue that 'the co-existence of two diametrically opposite qualities – diversity and unity – is essential for a strong individual and a strong organization'.

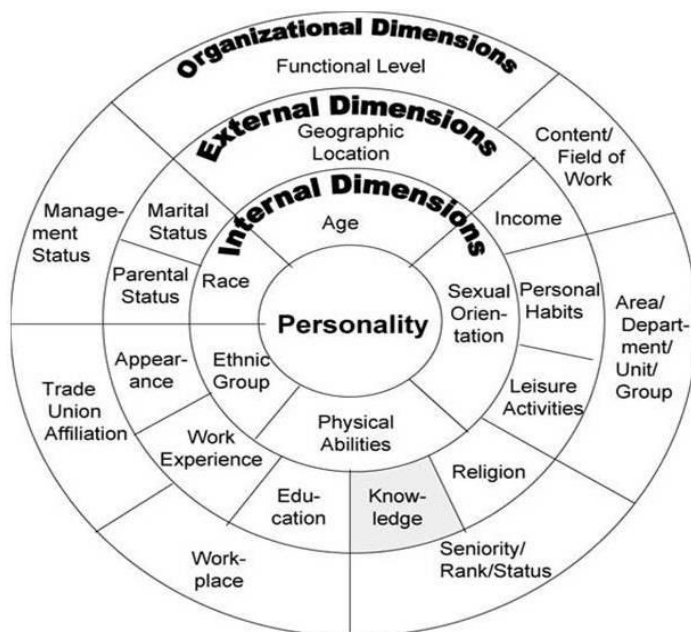
The ever-evolving internationalization of firms and the ensuing multinational-corporations in this twenty-first century seem to be a continuum that would continue for a long time to come. In this regard, several companies set up foreign branches and offices necessitating the integration of several ethnic and indigenous people. This translates into an involuntary association of people with wide array of differences with regards to racial, social, educational, psychological and behavioral orientations among others. A closer look at integration also revolves round diversity. Diversity denotes both the perceptible and non-perceptible differences and commonalities of the staff members (Thomas 1996, 306-317; Wächter 2003, 3-8).

Most advanced countries boast of democratic and advanced societies where equality and people integration are well pronounced. Nonetheless this assertion, there has been questions regarding the validity of the statement. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which racial equality and integration has been successful or pathetic. These questions regarding racial equality and integration are seen as being important to democratic life and workplace provide a platform for verifying the success or otherwise of these two propositions – racial equality and integration. 'Workplaces are, generally speaking, both more sociable and cooperative and more integrated than most places where adults spend time' (Cynthia 2003, 4).

The continual movement of people around the globe for the purpose of education and work bridges the gap voluntarily or involuntarily. There hardly exists the ability to choose whom to stay in class with or with whom to work together in an organization. 'The convergence of regular and constructive interaction and a degree of demographic diversity – suggests

that what happens in the workplace is extraordinarily important in a diverse democratic society and should be explored and cultivated' (Cynthia 2003, 4).

The term integration is reflected more clearly by Gardenswartz & Rowe (1994, 33) where the different aspects of integration or diversity were identified. This is shown by the graph below.



GRAPH 1. Dimensions of Diversity (Adapted from Maike Andersen, Diversity learning, knowledge diversity and inclusion 2007, 745)

The graph above depicts more clearly the different dimensions of diversity. In the centre is the individual personality and surrounded by this personality is a plethora of differences. From the internal dimensions to diversity exists differences such as age, gender, race, ethnic affiliations and physical abilities. There also exist the external dimensions to diversity which includes marital status, geographic location, income, personal habits, leisure activities, religion, knowledge, work experience. The organizational dimension to diversity is born out of the organization which includes content/field of work, departmental group, rank, trade union affiliation among others. It therefore shows that diversity is broad depending on the area where one looks at it.

The demographic nature of most European countries demands careful and purposeful redirection of efforts and policies to recruit and retain the vast educated minds of diverse

ethnic background. Perhaps, more effort is needed in attracting and retaining these skilled and talented foreign graduates across Europe. ‘The external law governing workplaces and the constraints that operate within workplaces help to make the often-troubled project of racial integration work relatively there. People can be forced to get along – not without friction, but with surprising successes’. Of course, the society cannot be forced to operate on such principles. ‘The process of working together both depends on and helps to produce relatively constructive intergroup relations to the extent that racial and ethnic diversity becomes an inescapable fact of life for employers’ (Cynthia 2003, 5).

## **2.2 Social Aspects of Integration**

Socialization focuses on how new members learn the values, norms, beliefs and behaviours of societies, organizations or groups (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 246). Women, older people, individuals with disabilities, and people with different ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, religious faiths, and sexual orientations are becoming regular players in the labour market (Iris Barbosa & Carlos Cabral-Cardoso 2007, 274). Despite the fact that these minority groups still find their way into the labour market, their socialization level is of considerable importance to the well-being of the company.

There exist two types of groups in the workplace – the organizational group and the identity group. The organizational group is of a more formal group which is related to the work. This group is stratified on the basis of job function, departmental or sectional categorization, hierarchy, skills and abilities. The identity group is more of a minority group in terms of culture and ethnic orientation. This group is seen as being disadvantaged in terms of power and opportunities (Iris Barbosa & Carlos Cabral-Cardoso 2007, 275).

The tendency usually exists that these identity groups are less hard-working, less intelligent and less skillful (Iris Barbosa & Carlos Cabral-Cardoso 2007, 275). The outcome of such myopic view of these identity (minority) groups is that they are being marginalized based on pseudo reasons relating to their minority features.

The presence of minority group in organizations may not be totally avoidable because of different laws in different countries protecting the rights of minority group not be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity and gender which are irrelevant to the performance of the job. These groups are important and integral part of the society and organization. As such adequate socialization is important for the benefit of the organization and overall harmony in society.

Socialization tactics can have considerable influence on the performance and integration of both the organizational group and identity group which Iris Barbosa & Carlos Cabral-Cardoso (2007) identified in their article. Socialization could occur in a collective or individual and in a formal or non-formal context (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 247).

A socialization tactic founded on a collective perspective in which all organizational entrants face 'common learning experiences designed to produce standardized responses to situations' (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 247). For the new comers or minority groups in an organization, it is imperative that the organization has a well defined collective approach aimed at integrating them into the system. This is of immense importance to the well-being and success of the integrating company. A sense of belonging needs to be created in the onset of such identity group or minority group.

A second approach to the socialization tactics as enumerated by Snejina & Wilson (2008) is the individual approach. In this approach, the individual is given the freedom to make his own unique definitions and develop responses while creating his own unique experience. The organization provides the socializing atmosphere in a form of information and training about his roles while being kept separate from other organizational members (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 247). Such individual approach through training and information provides the fore-socialization effect to the individual prior to being fully integrated into the organization.

A slightly different model of the individual approach was put forward by Harald & Lise (1995, 9-21) where they identify the earlier and later stages of individual integration efforts. They explore our interactions with people at different stages of development. At an

earlier stage of the integration approach, our interaction with people of outside culture is usually low and this restricts diversity, one sided view and stereotyping. At the later stage, we get more interactions with people; get to know other people and cultures and therefore, diversity is encouraged. We tend to tolerate people, respect for individuality, complexity, interrelatedness and collaboration. Interpersonal relations with other cultures become more strengthened.

At the earlier stage of an individual development in a multicultural set up, we tend to focus more on differences and parts and as such, fail to unify. Our intellect dominates our relationship. However, as we progress in the development of our relations with people, our hearts come together and intellect becomes secondary in our relationship. Our self actualization brings with it a shift from safety orientation to growth orientation (Harald & Lise 1995, 17).

TABLE 1. Individual Development towards the Ability to create coherence

Early and Middle Stages of Growth	Later Stages
Restricts diversity  One-sided, narrow point of view.  Stereotyping and generalizing control	Encourages diversity and empowerment  Tolerates ambiguity, paradox ad uncertainty  Respect for individuality, complexity and interrelatedness  Collaboration
Fails to unify  Focus on differences and parts  Intellect of mind dominates  ‘Who is to be blamed?’	Creates unity in diversity  Unity or wholeness is primary, diversity is secondary  Heart primary, intellect secondary  ‘What can we learn?’



Partial achievement	‘More for all’
Push and anxiety	Pull and satisfaction
Resistance and conservation	Innovation and transformation
Cure ‘Win-lose’	Prevention and Proaction
	Towards ‘win-win’

Adapted from Harald & Lise, Enhancing organizational performance by Strengthening diversity and unity, 1995, the table 1 above illustrates the assumptions of early and middle stages of ego development. It explores our interaction with people at different stages of development. It is clearly visible that the later stages of development is much more expanded than the earlier and middle stages of development.

An important aspect of both the individual and collective tactics to the socialization of new comers in an organization is the degree to which interaction with foreign nationals take place. More exposures and contacts with foreign nationals create the opportunity for an individual to learn from them and the development of cross-cultural understanding (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 247). A detached learning of an individual where no interaction takes place with foreign nationals is more of a theoretical based learning where no real knowledge is gained compared to when an individual comes in contact with a foreign national. As pointed out by Snejina & Wilson (2008, 248), ‘the perception of theoretical opportunities is far outweighed by the use of experiential knowledge to uncover concrete market opportunities’. Real integration of identity groups requires experimental learning where individuals repeatedly come in contact with foreign nationals.

The non-formal approach to integration provides newcomers in the organization with great freedom from various restrictions to make differentiated responses and innovative responses are likely results. A formal context is quite often related to expatriate training that enables social learning by providing the individual person with models of successful behavior (Snejina & Wilson 2008, 247-248)

## **2.3 Organizational Integrational Approaches**

The integration of employees of diverse ethnic and racial background as well as gender orientations poses great benefits to the company while it also creates a mutual understanding among employees. A plethora of organizational approaches to employees' integration of diverse ethnic and racial orientations abound. A few of these approaches or models will be surveyed in this section of the thesis.

### **2.3.1 The Schwartz model**

Integration is of great importance to the emerging organization. However, some organizations may not likely see the light of integration. The Schwartz model is of considerable importance to such companies that believed that integrating women well into the organization and therefore, such companies that believed they had no real problem of integration are called 'unaware'.

These kinds of companies have little or no regard for integrating people especially women. Mainly, the Schwartz model focused on women. In fact, such companies have loose policies in place mainly to satisfy labour laws and requirements. This measure is seen by Schwartz as primarily being 'regulatory' rather than to be implemented by the company. Schwartz however identified a third category of organizations that women are seen as important and such companies have in place policies targeted at enhancing women's performance. These kinds of organization are basically 'morality-driven'. A final classification of organizations identified by Schwartz is those companies that had 'multiple initiatives' to promote women. According to Schwartz, these organizations tended to focus on acceptance and valuing of talent across cultural and other differences broadening the focus beyond the promotion and development of women (Gloria & Julie 1999, 310).

Schwartz also identified few organizations that provided a 'level playing field' for employees. The Schwartz model emphasize the importance of providing a truly level playing field in organizations which she labeled as 'true equality' but concluded that this is

a utopian one in the current thinking of organizations and as such are unreachable (Gloria & Julie 1999, 310).

### 2.3.2 The Wilson model

Wilson's model is a continuum of the Schwartz model. The Wilson's model is used to develop a scale which Wilson referred to as the 'equity continuum'. The equity continuum is used to rank organizations on equitable employment practices. The Wilson model is based on the following:

- Zeros – No problem (equity not realized as a problem)
- Ones – Legislated fairness (due to required labour laws; not taken seriously)
- Twos – Good corporate citizens
- Threes – Business reasons (diversity being important for success of the company)
- Fours – Transition
- Fives – A goal to be achieved

TABLE 2. Wilson's result of companies in Canada

Continuum Position	Wilson's (1997) (%)	Present Study (1999) (%)
0-1	49	50
1-2	30	20
2-3	20	17.5
3-4	<0.1	12.5
4-5	0	0

Adapted from Gloria E. Miller and Julie I.A. Rowney, Workplace diversity management in a multicultural society (1999). The result derived from Wilson's research in 1997 and that of 1999 showed little discrepancy. Most of the companies researched into were between stages 0 – 3. In the 1997 result, less than 0.1 % valued diversity for business reasons. The 1999 results showed improvement of about 12.5 % over that of 1997. None of the companies surveyed in the 1997 and the 1999 were in the utopian stage 5.

## **2.4 The Role of Knowledge in Integration**

In a global, knowledge economy, organizational development depends significantly on attracting skilled human talent (Kim Coates & Stuart C. Carr 2005, 578). Maïke Andresen (2007, 743) argues that turbulent business environments necessitates firms especially knowledge intensive ones to apply forms of learning which allow the staff and the entire organization to adapt to the rapidly changing environmental conditions and to generate new knowledge about the handling of contingencies.

The world is not a static place and things are changing in mili-seconds, and thus companies are necessitated to change in nano-seconds to keep up with pace of changes happening around the globe. This requires an effective knowledge base for the company. The case for knowledge becomes more pronounced in a diversified work environment where differences abound. For the company to fully utilize the diversified workforce, the company must afford itself to be a learning organization where it is able to utilize the potentials that diversity portends.

The university is perhaps the first door to knowledge in industries. The role of universities cannot be estimated. In order to fully harness the opportunities which integration or diversity presents, institutions of higher learning (Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland) have, as part of their requirements study abroad programmes and international internships. These study abroad programmes internship prepare students for a multi-cultural work environment where differences in age, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture interplay in a mutually beneficial way. Like study abroad programme, international internships is a valuable means of preparing managers for the global village. (Basu Sharma & Judy Ann Roy 1996, 9).

## **2.5 Benefits of Integration**

Pollar & Gonzalez (1994, 22) have identified some benefits that integration presents. They argue that understanding different values and perspectives opens up new markets and opportunities. Minority groups are a good source of business opportunities and bigger

companies like Procter and Gamble has taken the advantage of this in its business. Lynwood Battle of Procter and Gamble say that ‘the companies that are going to survive and thrive in the next century are the ones that take full advantage of their workforce’. Similarly, James Preston of Avon argues that ‘managing diversity is not something to do because it is nice but because it is in their interests’ (Pollar & Gonzalez 1994, 9). This opinion was also shared by Roosevelt Thomas (1991) that ‘in business terms, a diverse work force is not something your company ought to have; it is something your company does have, or soon will have. Learning to manage that diversity will make you more competitive’

Competitive advantage can be generated by integrating and using the spectrum of capabilities, experience and knowledge of the staff in learning processes in an optimized way (Maik Andresen 2007, 745). Valuing diversity creates an atmosphere in which employees feel relaxed to associate with one another despite differences in age, gender, ethnicity and socio-cultural affiliations. It creates a sense of belonging among employees and they would be motivated to bring out their best.

Pollar & Gonzalez (2007, 22) also argue in same direction, they posit that diversity provides the benefits of productivity, creativity, innovation from all employees. They further posit that new perspectives which could be derived from a multicultural workplace enhance problem solving where business success is often dependent on group performance. An inclusive environment builds respect, ownership and loyalty.

Integration or diversity management as put by (Wrench John 2007, 10-11) improves the image of the company in the eyes of potential investors who choose to invest in companies demonstrating practices of corporate social responsibility. Even in the eyes of minority groups, companies that show signs of responsiveness to their needs are valued more than others. On a governmental level, it reflects the compliance of national and international laws against inequality of people and discrimination.

## 2.6 Problems Associated with Integration

Implementing an integration plan may prove to cause more problems than good. Administering the wrong dose to an ailment may be catastrophic. Improper management of diversity can hinder firm performance depending on the 'organization's culture, its strategies and human resource practices'. Ultimately, this may result to dichotomy between ingroup and outgroup situation where employees who are regarded as culturally different would experience low morale and reverse discrimination (Bergen C.W. Von, Soper Barlow & Parnell John A. 2005, 4-5).

The influx of both low and skilled immigrant groups comes with it, the challenge of access into the labour market of the host country (Sibylle, Nonna & Aviva 2010, 245). The challenge of access comes from both the inadequacy of the immigrants' human resource as well as their ethno-cultural affiliations. Modern labour markets are characterized with fierce competition and the difficulty of entrance of immigrants is of a greater competition and challenge. In essence, labour market disadvantage is a result of racial, gender or nativity discrimination and is not related to productivity of the group (Sibylle et al. 2010, 245-246).

Categorically, skilled immigrants (foreign students) face a variety of challenges in entering the host country's labour market among which include:

- Lack of strong social networks in the country.
- Macro-economic barriers resulting from governmental laws and regulations.
- Inadequacy of experience in host country, which is further worsened by insufficiency of practical training places for foreign students studying in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences.
- Language barriers.
- Prejudice (Sibylle et al. 2010, 246).

## **2.7 Language as it Relates to Integration**

Language is both a means of communication and a cultural issue that identifies which culture one comes from. Language is a facilitator among groups of people which enables the acquisition and sharing of information among them for their social interactions (Hanne Tange & Jakob Luring 2009, 218). The ability to speak so many languages is a plus to ones career as well as the hiring organization. ‘Using the other person’s language is not only a matter of courtesy, it decreases one’s dependence on interpreters, and increases one’s freedom of action and management potential’, (Richard Mead 1996, 213).

Fluency in each other’s language is of mutual benefit. It adds to one’s portfolio and language proficiency but doing this is not always an easy task to embark upon. The foreign worker in an organization who does have enough grasp of the local language is at a tactical disadvantage because breakdowns in communication are likely to occur. To prevent this from happening, it is quite important for the foreign employee to have a working knowledge of the local language. On the part of the local employees too, it is highly important that they know the foreign language.

Some multinational companies require that the local staff above a certain level gain proficiency in the language used in the headquarters and/or English and this determines the promotion prospects. However, learning a new language might prove to be very difficult and demoralizing. It is psychologically disturbing for having to go back to the classroom where ones ‘initial competence is childlike, and his professional authority counts for nothing (Richard Mead 1996, 214).

A multinational corporation like Siemens invests in language training and this suggests that top management recognizes the importance of language proficiency. This could be quite costly for the organization but it is to the overall advantage of the company. It is particularly important when immigrant workers exist in an organization. Inability for the immigrant worker to be proficient in the host company local language can be disastrous. (Siemens speaks several languages despite what the management says 2007, 16-17).

Businesses across national boundaries have necessitated participants to achieve a reasonable level of proficiency in each other's language. This is particularly true in most European countries where there are several languages and working in another European country can be quite challenging without adequate working knowledge of the other language. Most importantly, nationals of another country value one's expertise and skills when one has achieved a reasonable level of mastery of the host language. In a survey of 419 international students in Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences by the author in which only 14 respondents responded to the questionnaire, it is not unusual that six of the respondents felt that recommendation was instrumental in getting their present workplace, while another six felt that their skills were very important in getting a workplace. For the fact that the number of respondents who felt that skill in Finnish language was quite important was only two of the respondents do not only underscore the importance of language, but also show how it could be beneficial to one at the workplace. This little survey underscores the fact that mastery of the host language to some level is needed to integrate into the socio-economic terrain of the host country.

A company which realizes the opportunities in having an experienced foreign employee may be constrained by language barriers where adequate mastery of the local language by the foreign employee is below working level. However, all hope is not lost as language programs can be organized on the company's hours as realized by the general foam division of Tenneco Inc., in USA. At a point in time, the company had about 75 % of its employees speak Spanish and management decided to train the Spanish speaking group in English language and top management also received training in Spanish. The training was highly significant as it had a positive effect on work done and cooperation. Training the immigrant worker in the host language has been shown to improve morale, has implications for resolving conflicts, higher productivity, turnover and so on. This method may however not always be welcome by the company as it has serious economic implications for the company. Time off work and the costs of language training may constitute a burden on the company and may not be welcomed. In addition, language training for immigrant workers increases their job mobility and this may lead to loss of income if companies would have to increase remuneration in order to keep them. Of course, companies may offer language training in a job specific area, which reduces their



job mobility but this restricts their socio-cultural integration into the host culture (Richard Mead 1996, 225-226).

Additionally, the unwillingness of companies to provide language training on such a myopic level could be better addressed on a national level. Not only do companies gain from skilled workforce, government stands the chance to improve on its tax revenues resulting from higher productivity of the foreign workforce. To stimulate the employability of foreign students, government may and should as a matter of national importance create the enabling environment and incentives to foreign students to enroll in intensive language training after their studies in Finland rather than the 3-hour weekly Finnish lessons in school. Foreign students pose more opportunities in terms of providing skilled workforce to Finnish companies and government can provide more attention aimed at encouraging the learning of the language just as it provides incentives to refugee groups to learn the Finnish language.

On a wholistic perspective, employees who achieve a considerable level of language competence in one area activity in the workplace are motivated to expand their competence to other areas. An immigrant that is well equipped to speak the local language is much more prepared to integrate into the host culture and is able to make friends, visit public places and fit well into the work environment (Richard Mead 1996, 227).

## **2.8 Finnish Government Policy on Retention of Foreign Students**

The declining trend in the Finnish labour force is of concern to the Finnish government. Attracting skilled workers from other European Union states is one way of addressing this issue, another way is to attract and retain foreign students in Finland. The Finnish government has however, not really done so much to ensure that these foreign students find it conducive to stay after their studies. The Finnish policy on foreign students does not provide an enabling environment to find work and stay after graduation. Students are given six months to look for work after their studies (Finnish Immigration Service 2010). Language is a major requirement from job seekers though not the only one. However, three

hours a week of language studies for three or four semesters is not adequate to be proficient in the language. In essence, foreign students are not well equipped with the level of language required by employers. Unlike immigrants group, the Finnish government is yet to institute a policy that would make intensive Finnish language courses accessible to foreign students through the provision of financial support.

Those who are unable to secure a permanent job after their studies and still wish to stay in Finland are confined to take up the 'dirty work' without adequate orientation about their rights. 'Foreigners are reluctant to find fault in work conditions because residence permits require an employment contract' (Helsinki Times 2010, 1).

### **3 INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**

This part of the thesis introduces the case study company. It examines the historical background of the establishment from its early days up to its present state. It delves into the business areas of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj. The chapter also reviews integration as exemplified by some Finnish companies and it concludes by introducing variables which will form the core part of the thesis where empirical analysis shall be developed.

#### **3.1 Brief History and Information on Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj**

Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj is a top-notch media house. Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj is a traditional, bold new directional group whose main business areas include publishing, graphics and communications. Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj is a group comprising of different companies which include ArtPrint Oy, Kokkolan Jakelu Oy, Kosila Digimedia, Oy Creammedia AB and Reusner AS. Founded in 1963, Art-Print is a top-level printing house employing production technologies; provide significant benefits in synergy and a growing range of graphic services. Art-Print is responsible for high-quality and wide range of graphic and communication services and printing operations. Keski-Pohjanmaan's philosophy is a mental and physical growth, the creation of communication. This philosophy was born out and maintained in the group's early days since 1917.

Keski-Pohjanmaan was not born by mistake, information is quite vital in human's existence. Since Finland's independence in 1917, the need for information sharing was held in high esteem and Keski-Pohjanmaan was quick to fill the gap created by the lack of information. The need for information and communication was the pulling factor that saw to the establishment of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino and its associated companies. Since then, Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino has been providing the needed information to the Finnish people especially in the Ostrobothnian region where it holds a strong presence. The same need for communications is crucial today and more complex.

The amount of information and communication needs has grown and is growing at an accelerating rate. The challenge created by the need for a strong and reliable information sources which Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino was born out to address has to be more multi-media house.

The business idea of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj is the mental and physical growth of communication. Its core activities include the printing of nine own newspapers; Keskipohjanmaa, Haapavesi, Kalajokilaakso, Kokkola-lehti, Lestijoki, Perhönjokilaakso, Nivala-lehti, Selänne and Vieskalainen and it also prints for other companies.

The company had its first inaugural meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1917 with 696 shareholders representing 27 different municipalities in Finland. In about a month after on 4<sup>th</sup> December of same year, it had its first paper released. In 1918, it owned its own printing house and its first office building in Kokkola in 1926. In 1942, the new office building had its own printing machines. It started production of its print media by producing it six times in a week in 1945. After 15 years of setting up the Kokkola production house with the office building, it established a new printing house in Ylivieska in 1957 and opened its office building 5 years after in 1962. In 1977, it purchased a majority share in the Perhönjokilaakso newspaper and by 1978; it has owned the majority share in the Kokkola paper (Keski-Pohjanmaan 2010).

Keski-Pohjanamaan continued to expand and increase in value by acquiring a new printing machine in 1981. It owned the majority share in the Kalajokilaakso newspaper in 1986 and by 1987; it became necessary to expand its office building in Kokkola.

The company, in a bid to be better repositioned in the print media industry in the Ostrobothnian region, has recently formed a joint venture with HSS Media to form the new and well positioned Bothnia Print. Keski-Pohjanmaan owns two-thirds while HSS Media owns one-third of Bothnia Print. The new company is expected to start production of the two corporations' 16 publications in the new facility which is expected to be in operation by mid-2010. The new company promises to be even stronger in the future as remarked by the CEO of Keski-Pohjanamaan Kirjapaino, Antti Porkko. 'We don't believe the printed

word will die out: printed publications are important to our customers both now and in the future. Electronic media do not exclude printed newspapers and magazines rather than see the two types as opposite, we should think of them as supporting one another' (Coastline – life and business on the Finnish West Coast 2010 – 2011, 74).

### **3.2 Diversity Compliance of Selected Companies in Finland**

This section attempts to evaluate issues relating to the integration of different ethnic, cultural, gender into the corporate culture of some selected companies. The idea is to examine how these diversity concepts are well taken cognizance of for the overall success of such companies. Here, the diversity values of Nokia and F-Secure Corporation will be looked at.

The rationale behind examining these two Finnish companies is that they are multinational companies which operation across the globe. It therefore becomes logical that these Finnish multinationals will be the 'early adopters' of the concept of integration and diversity. Finland has been in international arena since the 1970's but the situation changed in the 1980's and 1990's. Similarly, 'large Finnish corporations are among the most internationalized in the world' as at the moment' (Susanna 2005, 2).

Although the percentage share of persons with a foreign nationality or background is one of the lowest in Europe, the unemployment rate of immigrants remains much higher than that of the population in general - though it varies remarkably according to the immigrant's country of origin (Susanna 2005, 2).

The information presented on these companies was obtained from the websites of the Finnish companies mentioned.

### **3.2.1 Diversity in Nokia**

Nokia is a telecommunication company with strong roots in Finland. It has operations in most countries of the world. From its business operations, it aims to evolve an all inclusive working environment which is deeply rooted in its corporate culture. As part of Nokia's corporate culture is to give opportunities to men and women of different ethnic and racial orientation to contribute their best of skills, abilities and perspectives for the benefit of the people and Nokia.

Nokia is committed to diversity issues as this is one of its key drivers of its operations. Diversity is at the heart of Nokia's values and therefore, Nokia expects that its employees value the strength and opportunities that diversity presents. It provides equal opportunities to its employees to grow and develop personally and on a professional level. Nokia realizes that there is benefit in differences and therefore allows every employee and to take an active role in building and supporting positive change.

In summary, Nokia's view of diversity which entails an all-inclusive work environment is founded on the following:

- Each Nokia employee shares the responsibility for inclusiveness.
- Nokia seeks, respects, values and benefits from differences.
- Inclusiveness is visible in management decisions and behavior, and in the way Nokia relates to employees, customers and business partners.
- Nokia's relationships are based on mutual respect and awareness of individual differences. (Nokia 2010, [URL:http://www.nokia.com/careers/diversity](http://www.nokia.com/careers/diversity)).

### **3.2.2 Diversity in F-Secure Corporation**

F-Secure Corporation is an IT security firm deploying security solutions to millions of computer users across the globe. By providing security services to users in order to protect and prevent the loss of valuable contents, F-Secure Corporation brings peace of mind for consumers and businesses in all their online services. F-Secure works with more than 200

operators across the globe through partnerships for the purpose of bringing IT security services to the end users. F-Secure Corporation is a global leader in IT security services. The company was founded in 1988 and employs approximately 700 professionals in 17 countries at the moment.

F-Secure Corporation's commitment to diversity is exemplified in one of its global career pages. It reads - respect for diversity is a big part of F-Secure's company culture' (F-Secure, 2010). This is further portrayed in the form of images of its global career page.

F-Secure Corporation encourages personal development with a balanced work life. It recognizes people as the most important part of its business and therefore encourages them to develop professionally while maintaining a balanced and healthy work life. F-Secure Corporation offers several unique benefits, flexible working arrangements and competitive compensation. 'We work in a multicultural environment with a high respect for diversity' (F-Secure 2010, [URL:http://www.f-secure.com/en\\_EMEA/about-us/careers/working-for-f-secure.html](http://www.f-secure.com/en_EMEA/about-us/careers/working-for-f-secure.html)).

### **3.3 Integration Readiness at Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj**

In order to build a solid foundation upon which the research question will be answered, what is the extent of readiness to integrate foreign students into working life in Finnish companies, the thesis forms a research model in order to look at and answer the question. The model was drawn up based on earlier write-ups relating to the study area. Answers to the research question is broadly divided into three categories for the purpose of this study and they include integration readiness as reflected in company values, willingness of management to absorb the potential in foreign students and extent of information on foreign students available to management and staff members.

### **3.3.1 Integration readiness as reflected in company values**

Company values have an important role to play when talking about integration. Various global companies reflect diversity discourse on their career webpages where statements regarding the extent to which diversity is important to their businesses are reiterated on several lines. As seen earlier, both Nokia and F-Secure have company values that respects and values diversity.

The research looks at the company values of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj to critically examine the extent to which diversity issues are reflected. Perhaps, one important reason why Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj was chosen as case study for the research is underlined by three important factors. Firstly, I had the opportunity of doing my practical training in the company. Secondly, it is a company to reckon with in the Ostrobothnian region in Finland with an estimated ten million Euros turnover in 2010 (€10 million). The most important factor is the fact that it is a group comprising of other companies and has some 200 employees (235 employees in 2006, 236 in year 2007 and 245 in year 2008 but the recession in 2008/2009 has necessitated the need to review its staff numbers). In brief, a company having about 200 employees is likely to have well defined values and specific human resources and policies (Susanna 2005, 7).

### **3.3.2 Willingness of Management to Create Opportunities for Foreign students**

The fact that the company reacted positively to the needs of international students for internship opportunities is and does not provide adequate substance to conclude that management is well committed to integrating foreign students into the company. The need for internship opportunities is an important aspect of university of applied science studies in Finland. Often a times, students have had to travel miles back to their home country not because they want to do internship in their home country but the opportunity is usually not given to them by Finnish firms. Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj took a giant step in year 2009 by providing internship places for five foreign students despite the harsh economic meltdown being witnessed across the globe. It was really a good start for an anticipated



long time beneficial relationship between Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj and international students in Kokkola in particular.

The research seeks to find answer to the extent of readiness to integrate foreign students into the company by the management. Specifically here, integrating foreign students has to do with making internship places available and creating professional employment opportunities which will afford foreign students to make use of their studies while in school; employment opportunities in a mutually beneficial way that adds value to the business area of Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj; that pays back to the Finnish government in form of taxation having provided education to the foreign students; and providing the graduates with socio-economic sense of belonging to the Finnish state without losing their cultural identities.

### **3.3.3 Information on Foreign Students Available to Management and Staff**

This part of the research question concentrates on both the management and employees of Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj. The idea is to find out among other things:

- How well they know foreign students
- How well the foreign students in the company has performed during their internship stay at the company
- How multi-culturally adaptive the staff members are
- Their interests in working in an all inclusive work environment where the perception of differences in race, gender, cultural orientation among other will be seen as an opportunity rather than as a threat or hindrance.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The term ‘method’ can be understood to relate principally to the tools of data collection or analysis: techniques such as questionnaires and interviews. Methodology usually refers to the approach that underpins the research (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2006, 58). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to present and justify the research methodologies adopted by the writer. The data will also be analysed which will then form the core part of the research work and conclusions made from the results of the data analysis.

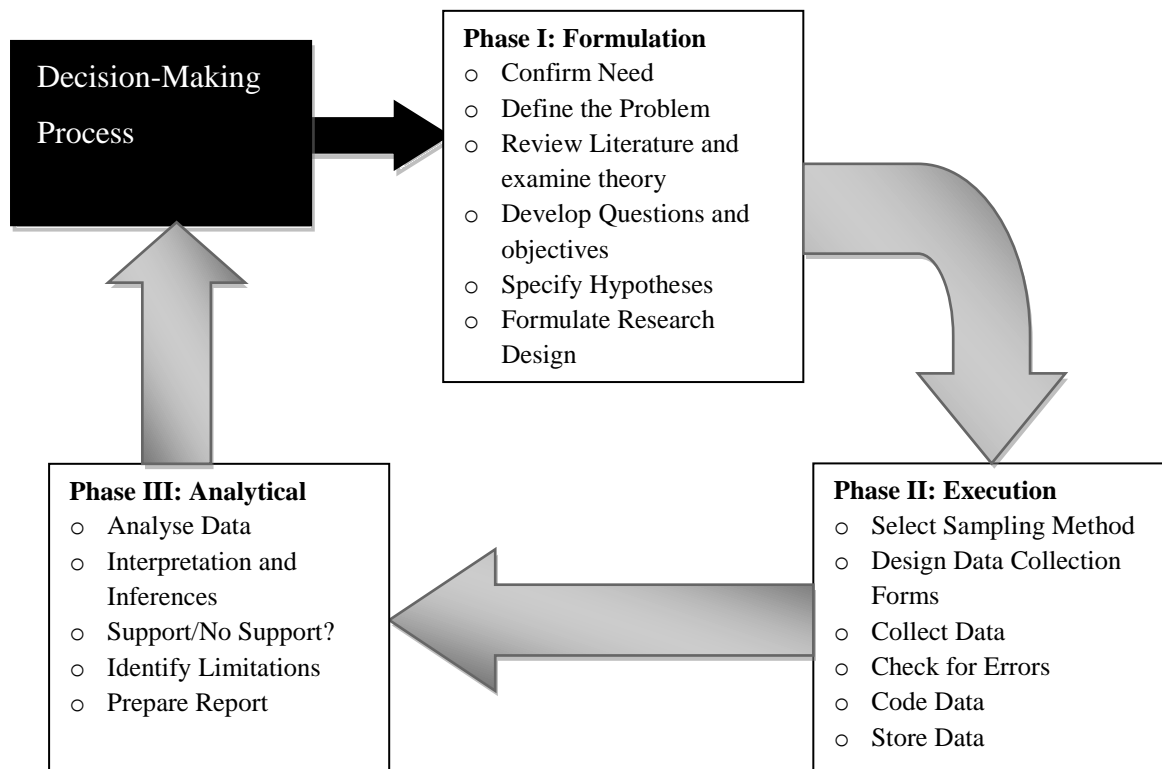
### **4.1 The Research Process**

Joseph, Arthur, Philip & Mike (2007, 32) write that ‘the business research process provides a roadmap with directions for conducting a business research project’. The business research process generally involves three stages which involves the formulation, execution and analytical phases. The formulation stage is the first stage which requires defining the substance and the need for the research. In a miniature survey conducted by the author and with regular interactions with international students in Finland, nearly all the international students felt they could not be well integrated into the Finnish working life after their studies and they were already thinking about their next line of action after their studies in Finland. Thus the problem that necessitated the research was to look at the extent of readiness of Finnish companies to integrate the foreign students into the Finnish working life.

Executing the research process was not really an easy task; getting the literatures took time and energy. Also based on the topic of discourse, decision was made on the method upon which the research study will be executed. The data collection adopted by the writer includes the use of questionnaire and interview, the basis of such method will be discussed in subsequent sections the research work.

The final part of the research process involves analysing and this basically has to do with reviewing the results obtained from the execution stage and reporting them. Preparing the report is an important part of the research process because it communicates the important results, findings, observation of the research work.

The business research process is summarised with the diagram below:



GRAPH 2. The Business Research Process (Joseph et al. 2007).

## 4.2 The Mixed Methodology

As earlier pointed out, a research method refers to the tools of data collection and analysis that underpins the research study. The purpose of this section is therefore to introduce what is called the mixed methodology by Abass & Charles (1998, 1-3). Mixed methodology involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study. The research study employs the mixed methodology of both qualitative and quantitative.

The rationale behind the use of both research methods for the purpose of this research method will be justified in the following section.

#### **4.2.1 Quantitative Research**

As the name suggests, quantitative research method involves the use of quantifiable substances and their properties in finding answers to the ‘what’ questions. As pointed out by Biggam John (2008, 86), quantitative research is concerned with quantities and measurements. Usually, quantitative research employs the use of numerical means to obtain information on an area of study which may then be presented in a descriptive format, often time graphically. Quantitative research methods are often times tagged as being scientific because it presents information in numerical form. However, this does make quantitative approach to be superior or preferred to qualitative research as would be seen in the next section.

#### **4.2.2 Qualitative Research**

Unlike quantitative research that seeks to find out ‘what’ questions, qualitative research is concerned with the ‘why’ questions which answers are usually obtained through interview notes, videos, photos, feedback forms. Biggam John (2008, 86) asserts that qualitative research is ‘linked to in-depth exploratory studies where the opportunity for quality responses exists. Qualitative research is best suited for studying ‘things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Biggam John 2008, 86).

Joseph et al. (2007, 288) have identified five cases where qualitative research is sought after. Qualitative research is preferred:

- I. where little or no knowledge about a research problem or opportunity exists;
- II. where earlier studies only explains partially or incompletely address the research problem;

- III. if current knowledge involves complex or evolving phenomena that needs to be organised or simplified to examine further;
- IV. if the researcher needs to more fully understand phenomena to clarify patterns and themes and;
- V. if the primary purpose of the research is to propose a conceptual/theoretical framework that could later be tested with quantitative approach.

It is important to point out that the current study adopts both qualitative and quantitative approach. The research made use of structured questionnaires (which mainly include close-ended questions) to find out certain issues relating to the study and also conducted an interview to elicit information relevant to the accomplishment the research objectives. The reality is that professional researchers rarely do stick to only one research method; there is usually a mix of both methods (Biggam John 2008, 86; Michael Myers 2009, 9).

### **4.3 Case Study**

A Case study research is an ‘empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. Case study inquiries make use of multiple sources of evidence and focus on real-life events (Michael Myers 2009, 74-75). As pointed out by Joseph et al. (2007, 203), a case study research focuses on a specific event or activity – often a firm or industry. The rationale behind case study is that it enables a researcher to obtain a complete picture of a real-life event.

One important advantage of a case study is that it is ideally suited to the needs and resources of a small-scale researcher allowing him to focus on just one example, or perhaps two or three. Usually, the case study may focus on the researcher’s place of work, another company, school and so on. A Case study also allows a deductive argument which derives its strength by making generalization from a specific level to a more general level.

Considering the limited availability of time and resources, the research work adopted a case study to examine the readiness of Finnish companies to integrate foreign students. Extensive information is given on the case study company, Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj. The researcher had earlier undergone practical training with the company which is a sign that the company is ready to integrate foreign students into the company. This assertion needs to be confirmed.

#### **4.4 Data Collection**

Data provides the basis for analysis and can be either primary or secondary. ‘Data used for research that was not gathered directly and purposefully for the project under consideration are termed secondary data’ (Joseph et al. 2007, 118). Primary data are those ‘data which are unpublished and which the researcher has gathered directly from the people or organization and may include data from interviews, fieldwork, and unpublished documents such as minutes of meetings and so forth’ (Michael Myers 2009, 122).

The data used in the research were obtained from two in-depth interviews (face-to-face) with management staff and questionnaires which were administered to the employees working in Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj. In all, there were 20 responses out of 35 questionnaires that were sent out to full-time staff members at the Kokkola unit. This represents a response rate of 57 %.

#### **4.5 Reliability and Validity of the Study**

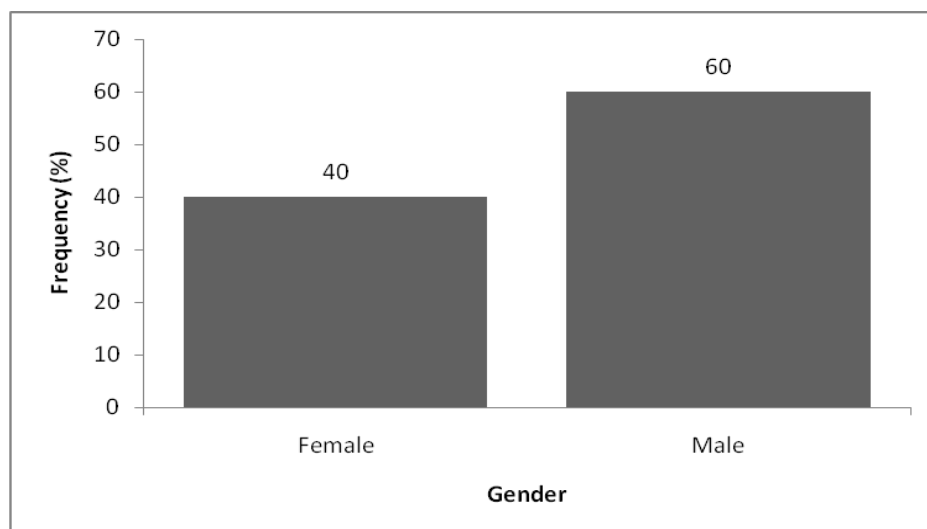
Validity and reliability is concerned with the quality of the research both in qualitative and quantitative researches. Reliability is the degree of consistency in assignment of similar words, phrases or other kinds of data to the same pattern or theme by a researcher or different researchers. Validity refers to the ‘extent to which a qualitative finding accurately represents the phenomena being examined’ (Joseph et al. 2007, 297).

To ensure the reliability of the research, a pilot test was conducted among the employees mainly to verify that the questions were clearly understood and the language of the questionnaire is simple and not so sensitive. Comments were made on the design and language and this was taken into consideration. In a case study research, validity can be assessed by comparing the researcher's proposition to the outcome of the research.

#### 4.6 Analysis of Case Study Results

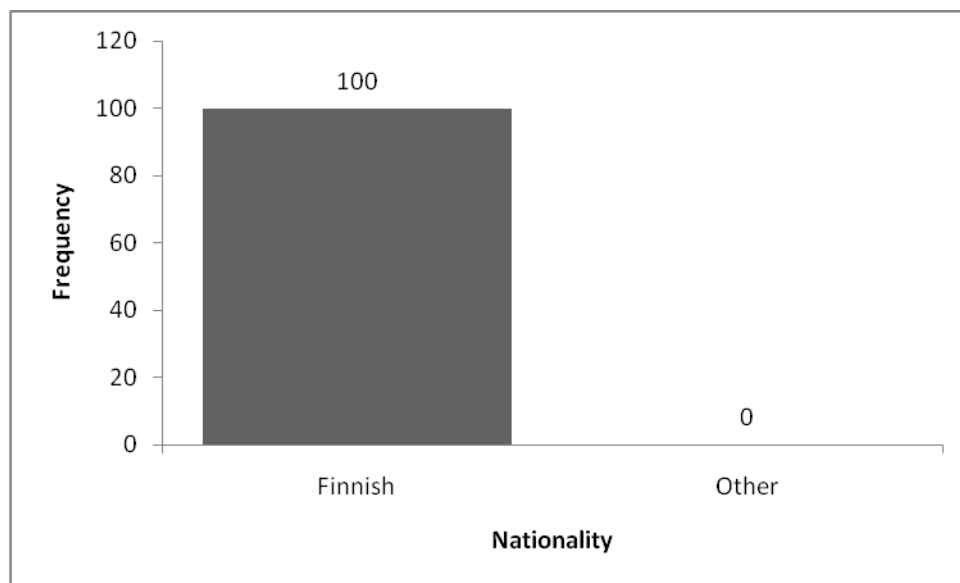
Data analysis helps the researcher to quantify research findings and draw up integrative conclusion between the literature review and researcher's empirical findings. Data analysis also depends on the kind of research and data collection method used. Below are the analyses of the quantitative data which was gathered through the use of questionnaire.

The questionnaire has eleven (11) questions in all. The first six questions were aimed at finding background information about the respondents. The first question was to find out the gender of the respondent.



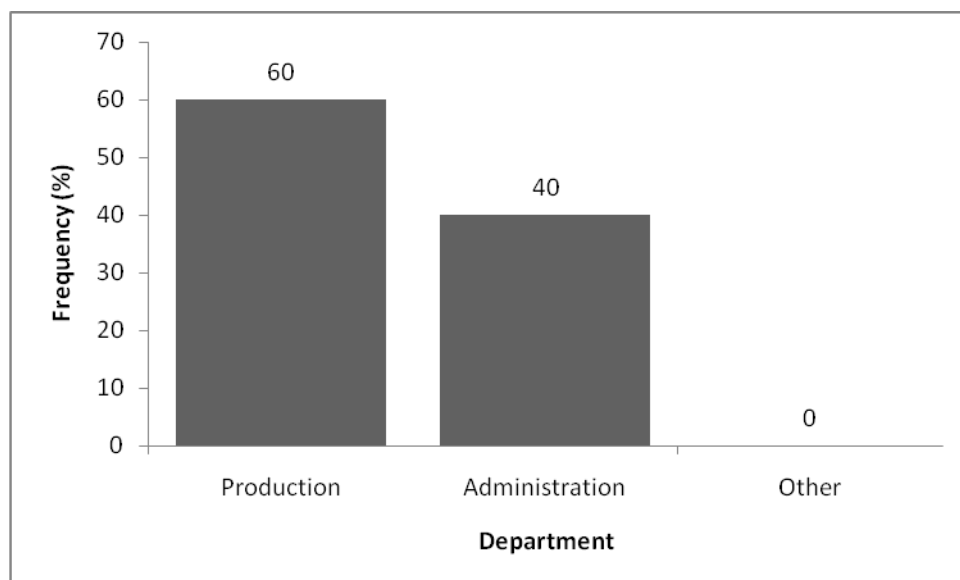
GRAPH 3. Gender of respondents

Question 2 focuses on the nationality of the respondents. All the respondents were from Finland. This suggests that the company is a mono-cultural work environment.



GRAPH 4. Nationality of respondents

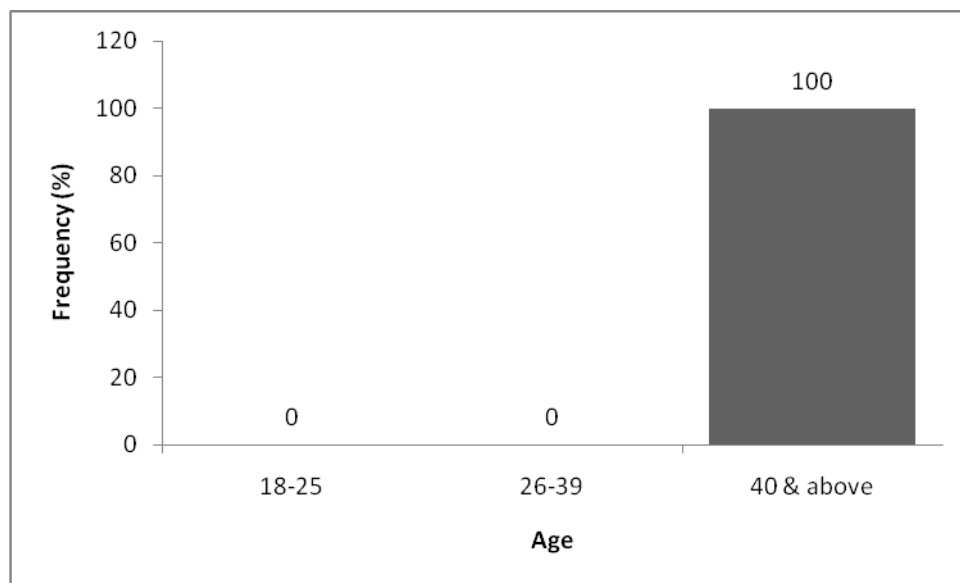
Question 3 seeks to find out the respondents department at the company. The findings showed that 60 % of the respondents work in the production unit while the remaining 40 % works in administration.



GRAPH 5. Respondents department in the company

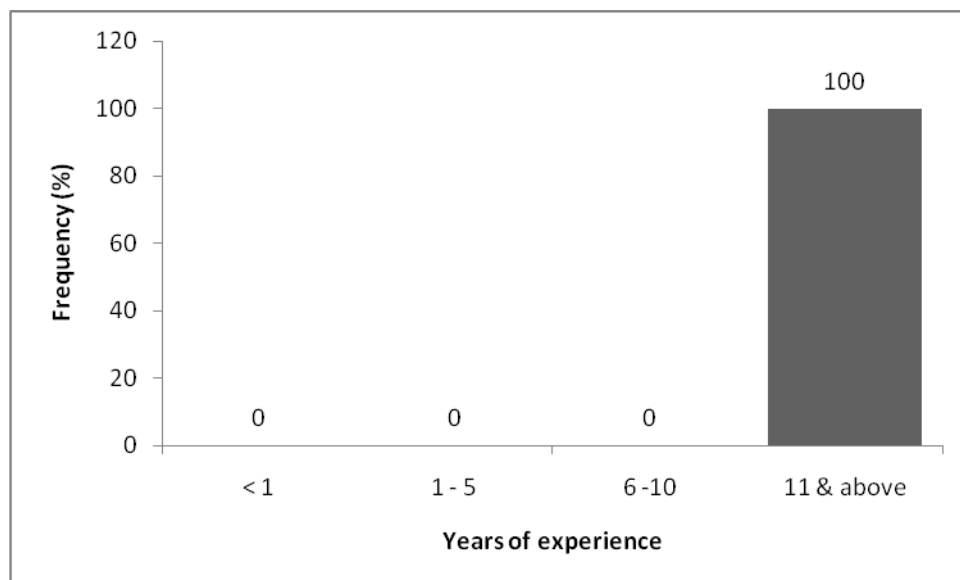
Question 4 was to find out the age range of the respondents. All the respondents were 40 years and above.





GRAPH 6. Respondents' ages

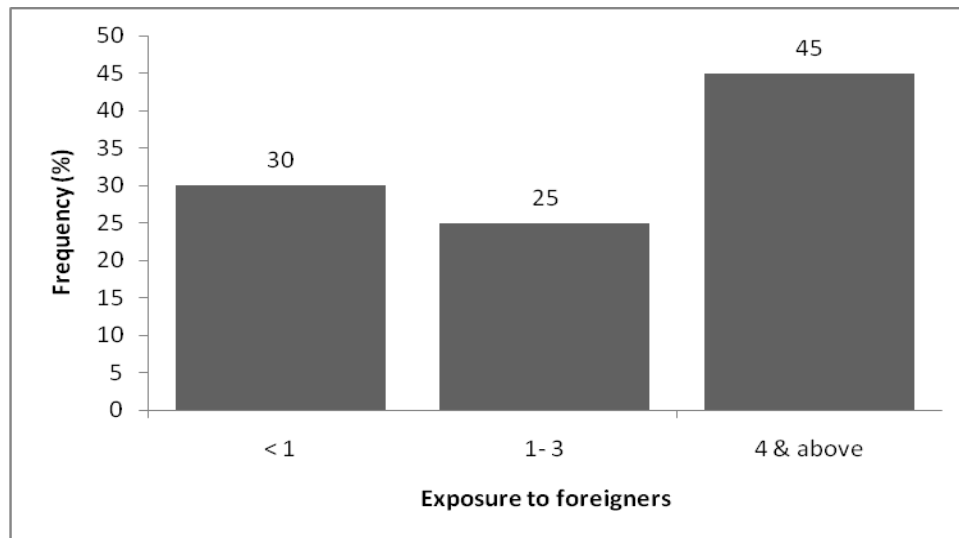
Question 5 was to find out how long the respondents have been working with Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino. All the respondents have worked with Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino for more than 11 years.



GRAPH 7. Years of experience with Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj

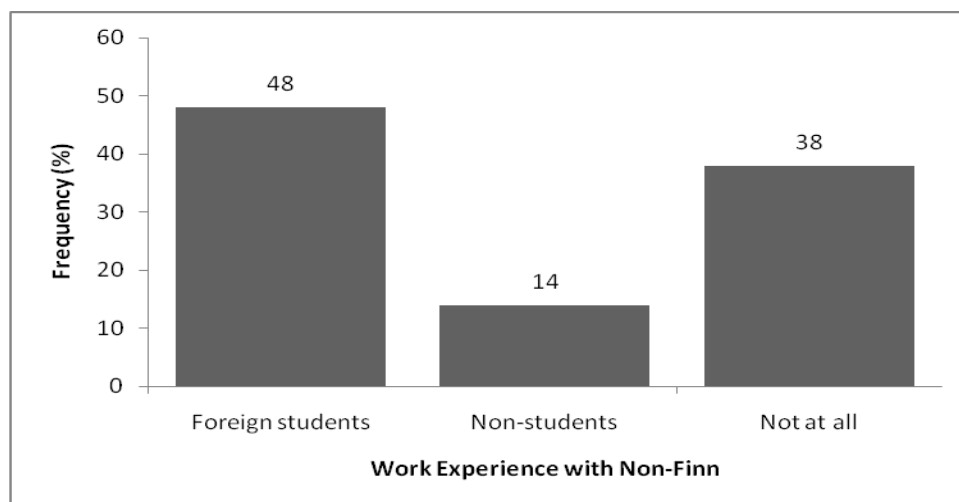
How long the respondents have been exposed to foreigners in their own locality was addressed in question 6. Some 30 % of the respondents have been in contact with foreigners for less than one year, 25 % of the respondents is exposed to Non-Finns between

one to three years while 25 % have had to do one thing or the other with foreigners for more than four years.



GRAPH 8. Number of years the respondents have been exposed to foreigners

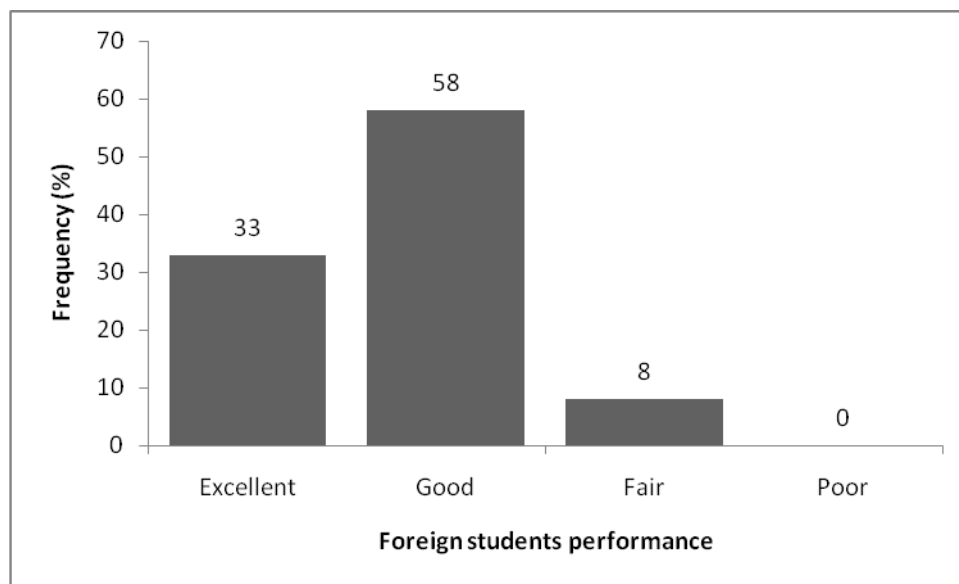
Questions 7, 8 and 9 aim to find out the experience of the respondents with non-Finns. Question 7 asked the question focusing on respondents work contact with foreigners.



GRAPH 9. Respondents work contact with non-Finns

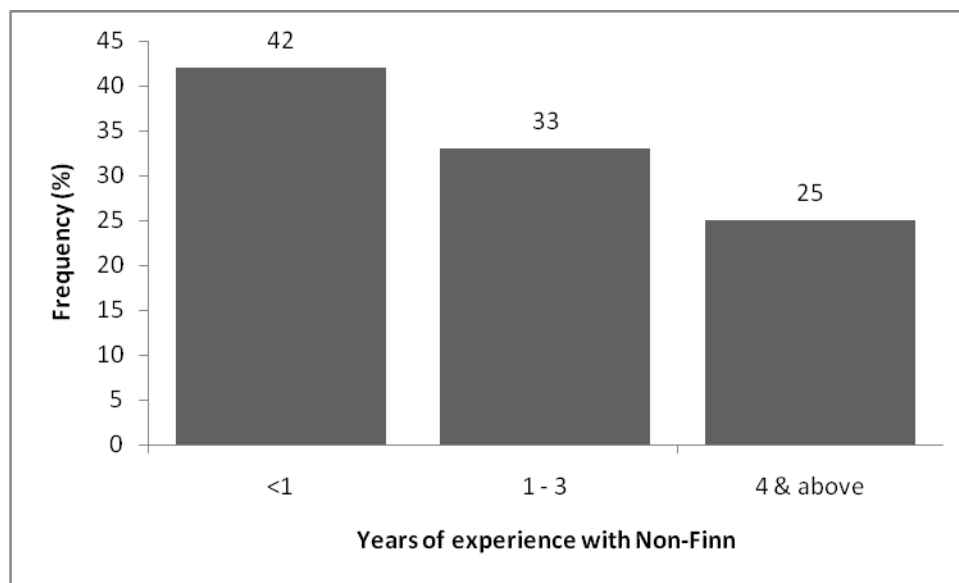
Out of the 10 respondents which represents 48 % in question 7 said they have worked with foreign students, 3 respondents representing 14 % said they have worked with foreigners other than student while 38 % have no experience working with a non-native Finn. In all, 62 % of the respondents said they have worked with non-Finns.

To further analyse the work contact of the 62 % that have had the opportunity to work with Non-Finns, three sub-questions were asked. Question 7a was to find out the performance of the foreign students. Out of the 10 respondents that said they have worked with foreign students, 33 % felt that the performance of the students was excellent while 58 % said that their (foreign students) performance was good. Only 8 % said that their performance was fair while non of the respondents ticked poor.



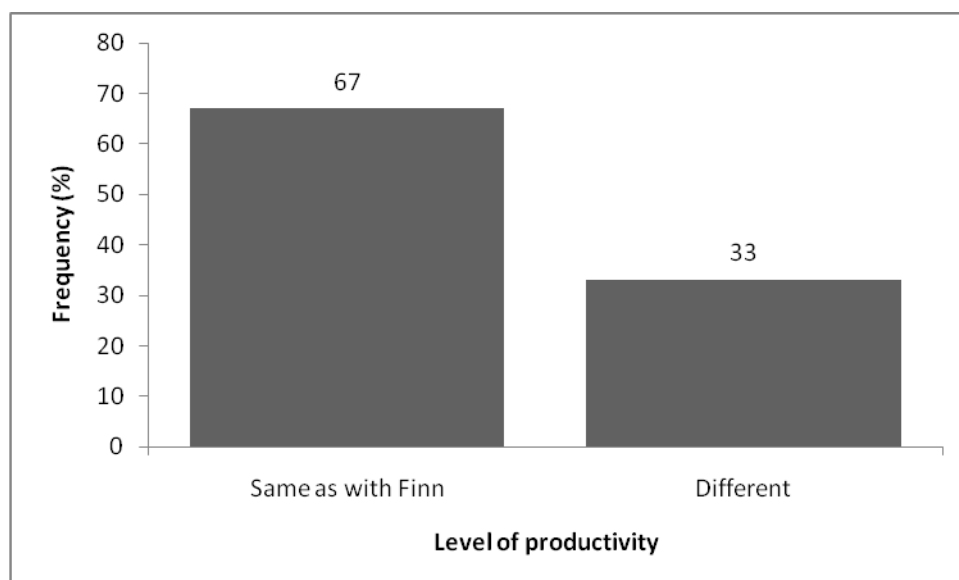
GRAPH 10. Performance of foreign students

The respondents that have had the opportunity to work with foreigners were also asked how long they have worked with non-Finns. The result shows that 42 % of the respondents have worked with non-Finns for less than a year, 33 % has worked with foreigners between one to three years while 25 % have worked with foreigners for more four years. This information is presented in the graph 11 below.



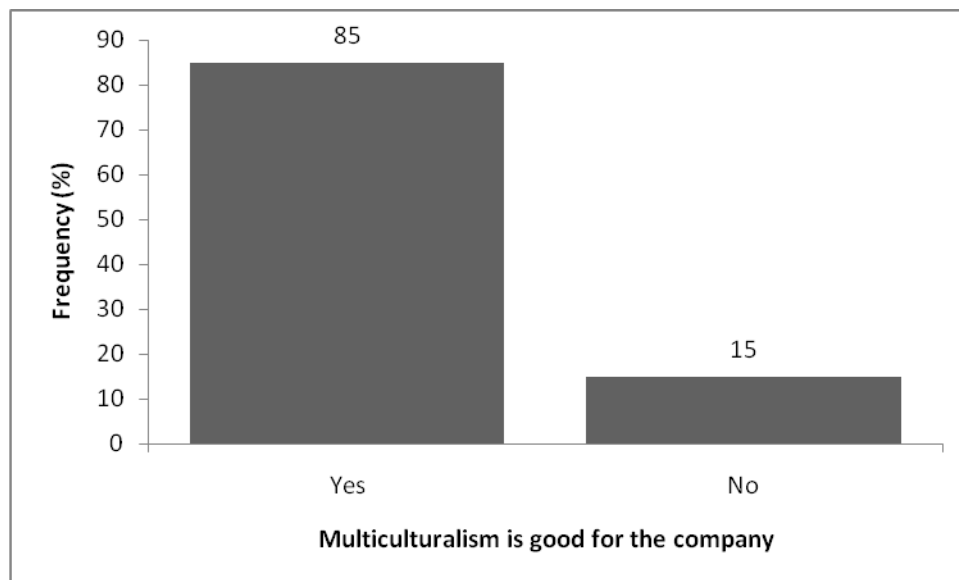
GRAPH 11. Years of respondents' experience with Non-Finns

Question 7c focuses on the level of productivity. The question, 'do you get the same level of productivity as if you were working with someone as your own culture?'. The result showed that 67 % of the respondents felt that the level of productivity of foreigners is the same as with Finns while 33 % felt that the level of productivity is quite different when working with someone outside one's own culture.



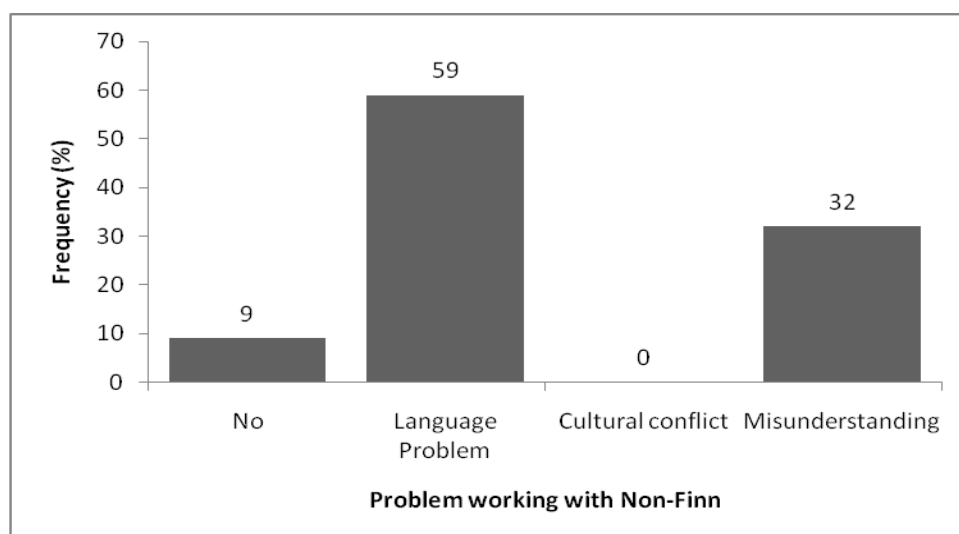
GRAPH 12. Foreigners level of productivity

Perceived benefit of a multicultural work environment was the focus of question 8. ‘Do you think having a multicultural workplace at Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino will be of benefit’ was asked and 85 % of the respondents think that a multicultural work place at Keski Pohjanmaan will be beneficial while 15 % do not think of any benefit.



GRAPH 13. Multicultural work environment is good for Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino

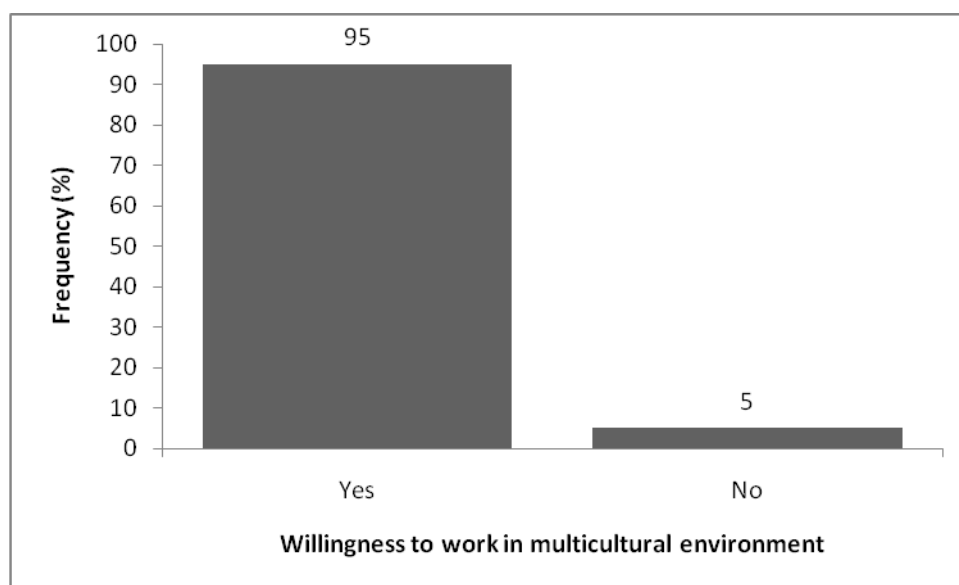
Question 9 was intended to know about problems that may arise, from respondents' perspectives, if they work with someone outside their own culture.



GRAPH 14. Barriers to working in a multicultural environment

Some 9 % felt they are okay to work with someone who is not of the same culture, 59 % thinks language is a barrier to working in a multi-cultural environment while 32 % thinks misunderstanding may arise from working with someone outside their own culture. None of the respondents thinks cultural differences are a barrier.

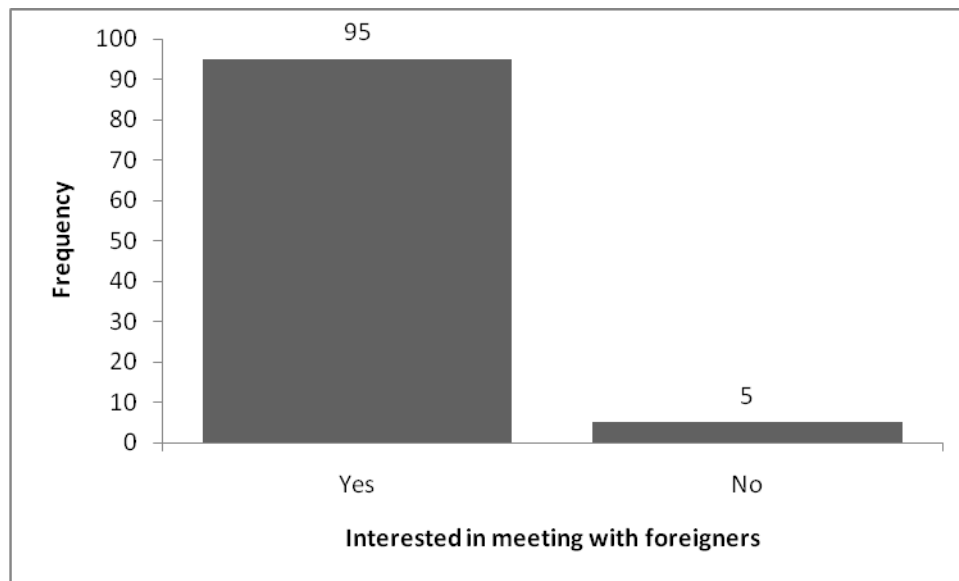
Questions 10 and 11 focus on the workers' willingness to work in a multicultural work environment. 'If and when Finland becomes more multicultural, would you like to work with someone outside your own culture?' was asked in question 9 and the response is as shown in graph 15 below.



GRAPH 15. Respondents' willingness to work in a multicultural environment

As reflected above, nearly all the respondents would like to work in a multicultural work environment. Only 5 % are not willing to work with people outside their own culture.

Question 11 explores the respondents' interests in meeting and interacting with people from other cultures. Totally, 95 % are willing to meet and interact with people from other cultures while 5 % would like to interact only among their own culture.



GRAPH 16. Respondents' willingness to meet and interact with people outside their own culture

#### 4.7 Interpretation of Results

In this section of thesis, attempt is made to elucidate more on the research findings. The results from the first six questions indicated that the company has a mix of both female and male workers in all its departments. One thing that is not so surprising to the researcher however is the fact that all the employees are natives of Finland which shows that the company is basically Finnish oriented. As pointed out during an interview with the research and administration manager, Finnish language is the major business language of the company. This also presupposes that the company is not diversity-oriented for the single fact that none of the respondents come from outside Finland. In one of the dimensions of diversity mentioned by Maïke (2007, 745), age was one of the internal dimension. The researcher however found out that all of the respondents were above forty-years and have worked with Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino for more than eleven years indicating a lot of older workers in the company. Although, older workers are valued for their expertise on the job, the young shall also grow. The workers are also exposed to foreigners between less than a year to more than four years. About half of the respondents have been exposed for more than four years. This perhaps signifies that meeting with foreigners is not a new experience to the workers.

The next three questions focused on the workers' relationship with people outside their own culture. More than 60 % of the respondents have had the opportunity to work with people outside their own culture with about half working with foreign students. The results also showed that 33 % and 58 % of those that have worked with foreign students agreed that the foreign students' performance was excellent and good respectively. This represents 92 % good performances. Only 8 % felt that the students' performance was not good enough while none said that they performed poorly. This further confirms the researcher's view that students who go abroad to study often have the strong desire to succeed. The result also showed that 42 % of the respondents have only recently worked with people outside their ethnic background while 33 % and 25 % have worked with people outside their own culture between one to three years and four years and above respectively. Moreso, 67 % of the respondents said that the level of productivity while working with people outside their own culture remains the same while 33 % said they get different levels of productivity.

A question that centered on multiculturalism was asked and 85 % felt that it is good for the company although, they have their fears about the idea of multiculturalism in the company. One major fear was the issue of language, 59 % said there is likely to be a language problem in a multicultural work environment while 32 % felt there is likelihood of misunderstanding to occur. This is normal even within the same ethnicity. Only 2 % felt that multiculturalism poses no real threat.

Consequently, a good number of the respondents are willing to work in a multicultural environment and are also willing to meet and interact with people from other cultures. This is confirmed through the responses from questions ten and eleven.

In addition to the employees' responses to the questionnaire, the researcher also conducted two interviews. The interview has thirteen (13) questions and of course, follow-up questions were asked to further clarify issues raised during the interviews. The interview was designed to bring into light the issues raised in the literature review as it relates to Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino. The issues include the perspectives upon which the management views multiculturalism and what it is doing or will do in the future.



Management clearly understands multicultural issues. In one response, ‘multiculturalism is a great opportunity for us’. The company has business operations in Estonia which is a Baltic country. In fact, multiculturalism as understood by management ‘is not a barrier but knowledge and capabilities’ are most important to the company. A question on the potential economic benefits of multiculturalism workplace was asked which management sees as non-existent because this would lead to segregation and this would be against the company’s value of ‘equality’. A written policy on diversity is non-existent because of the fact that the company is a regional company which produces news only in Finnish language. However, the company’s policy is to be equal in all respect to people irrespective of their ethnic background.

Communicating information on multiculturalism has not been a point of issue to the company due to the fact that the company has not recruited full-time employees in the last decade. However, management is beginning to look at these because there would be a need for labour in some coming years. Looking at other Finnish companies in the Ostrobothnian region, management views most Finnish companies as being mono-cultural due to inadequacy of language skills of foreigners. In addition to language proficiency, stereotyping is a problem to address. Apart from language, management views cultural differences as a barrier to integration of foreign students into Finnish companies. Finnish history also has an impact on Finns’ attitudes towards foreigners.

The retirement of older workers in some three to five years to come would have an impact on the company. The company is now starting to look at ways of addressing the looming shortage of labour in the company. In this regard, management feels that foreign students are one way of filling the gap that would be created by the retirement of older workers. In addition, management is willing to tap some percentage of ‘clever people who has come to Finland to study rather than seeing them ‘pack their suitcases and leave because they are not able to get work’. Management is therefore willing to create opportunities for foreign students to display their talent and capabilities.

## **5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This is the concluding section of the research work. A summary of the findings of the thesis is made available in this chapter and a discussion and conclusion part is presented at the latter part of the chapter.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The research work kicked-off with the introduction of the main discourse why integration is an important issue to be discussed. An overview of the concept of integration and its different approaches was highlighted in addition to the benefits and barriers to integration. It also looks at how diversity issues are addressed in top Finnish companies. A research model was introduced to initiate the variables that would be used to conduct the research. The research variables included the willingness of management to integrate foreign students and the amount of information on foreign students available to Keski-Pohjanmaan as well as the values of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj.

The research process was done in chapter four and the results emanating from the process were also presented. The findings of the research indicated that management is committed to integrating foreign students into the company whenever it becomes feasible. The company is also willing to provide internship places to foreign students provided internship places are available. Information gathered from the employees showed that they have good stories working with foreign students and are willing to meet more foreign students.

### **5.2 Discussions and Conclusions**

The thesis has been able to review the integration readiness of Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj which was positive. However, action speaks louder than voice. Much cannot be said of other Finnish firms as the main focus was on Keski-Pohjanmaan

Kirjapaino. The Finnish government has done so much by bringing in foreign students to study in Finland. Nonetheless, it needs to create a framework to ensure that these foreign students are enticed to stay and contribute to the Finnish state. It would be a show of ingratitude on the part of foreign students to pack their suitcases upon graduation and move elsewhere to make use of the knowledge they had gained studying in Finland. International competition for skilled labour is fierce and Finland needs to ensure that it retains its trained professionals than to compete for the scarce skilled labour in the international arena. Finnish policy on foreign students does not provide an enabling environment, in terms of language policy and residence permit, for foreign students to stay in Finland after their studies.

In addition, there is need for more research to be carried out in this field as Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino is only one out of the thousands of Finnish firms. How ready they are to integrate foreign students cannot be ascertained at the moment. It is however anticipated that in the very near future, the story would have changed and foreign students who have come from all over the globe are well integrated into the Finnish society and are able to contribute to the Finnish economy.

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## Interviews

Antti Porko, Managing director, Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj

Heli Erkillä-Lehto, Research and administration manager, Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj



## APPENDICES

Questionnaire: Finnish Text

### Tutkimus suomalaisten yritysten valmiudesta integroida ulkomaalaisia opiskelijoita

Hyvä vastaanottaja,

Kirjoitan opinnäytetyötäni, joka käsittelee suomalaisten yritysten valmiuksia tarjota ulkomaalaisopiskelijoille mahdollisuuksia työsuhteeseen ja työharjoitteluun tavoitteenaan integroida heidät suomalaiseen työelämään. Kaikki kyselyssä esiintyvä informaatio käsitellään luottamuksellisenä ja tulokset esitellään yhteenvedossa, josta yksittäisten vastausten tunnistaminen on mahdotonta. Olen erittäin kiitollinen ajastanne ja näkemästänne vaivasta vastatessanne kyselyyn.

- 
1. Olen ☐ Nainen ☐ Mies
  2. Olen kotoisin ☐ Suomesta ☐ Muualta, mistä?
  3. Työskentelen ☐ Tuotantoyksikössä ☐ Hallinnossa ☐ Muualla, missä?
  4. Olen iältäni ☐ 18 – 25 vuotta ☐ 26 – 39 ☐ 40 tai enemmän
  5. Olen työskennellyt Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj:ssä  
☐ < 1 vuosi ☐ 1 – 5 vuotta ☐ 6 – 10 vuotta ☐ 11 tai enemmän
  6. Olen ollut tekemisissä ulkomaalaisten kanssa omalla paikkakunnallani  
☐ < 1 vuosi ☐ 1 – 3 vuotta ☐ 4 vuotta tai enemmän
  7. Olen työskennellyt henkilöiden kanssa, jotka tulevat toisesta kulttuuriympäristöstä  
☐ Kyllä (ulkomaalaiset opiskelijat) ☐ Kyllä (muut kuin opiskelijat) ☐ Ei  
 Jos vastasit KYLLÄ, jatka kysymyksiin 7a, 7b ja 7c, muussa tapauksessa voit edetä kysymykseen 8.
  - 7a Jos vastasit kyllä, heidän työpanoksensa oli ☐ Kiitettävä ☐ Hyvä ☐ Kelvollinen  
☐ Huono
  - 7b. Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt ulkomaalaisten kanssa  
☐ < 1 vuosi ☐ 1 – 3 vuotta ☐ 4 vuotta tai enemmän
  - 7c. Onko ulkomaalaisen kanssa saavutettu tulos yhtä hyvä kuin mitä se olisi suomalaisen työntekijän kanssa? ☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei

8. Uskotko, että monikulttuurisesta työympäristöstä olisi hyötyä Keski-Pohjanmaan Kirjapainolla? ☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei
9. Uskotko, että työskentely ulkomaalaisen kanssa voisi aiheuttaa ongelmia tai ristiriitoja? (Voit valita useampia vaihtoehtoja)
- ☐ Ei ☐ Ongelmia kielen kanssa ☐ Kulttuurieroista johtuvia ongelmia  
☐ Väärinkäsityksiä
10. Nyt kun Suomi on muuttumassa yhä monikulttuurisemmaksi, haluaisitko työskennellä henkilön kanssa, joka on kotoisin oman kulttuuriympäristösi ulkopuolelta?
- ☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei
11. Oletko kiinnostunut tapaamaan muista kulttuureista kotoisin olevia henkilöitä ja toimimaan heidän kanssaan? ☐ Kyllä ☐ Ei

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## Questionnaire: English Text

**Research on Readiness of Finnish Companies to Integrate Foreign Students**

Dear respondent,

I am writing my thesis that seeks to find out the readiness of Finnish companies to integrate foreign students in terms of internship opportunities and employments to prepare them for the Finnish working life. All information provided in this questionnaire will be treated as strictly confidential and answers will be released only as summaries in which no individual respondent can be identified. I am very grateful and appreciate your time and efforts in answering the questionnaire.

---

1. I am ☐ Female ☐ Male
2. I come from ☐ Finland ☐ Other, which
3. I work in ☐ Production unit ☐ Administration ☐ Other, which
4. I am between ☐ 18 – 25 years ☐ 26 – 39 ☐ 40 and above
5. I have been working with Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino Oyj for  
☐ < 1 year ☐ 1 – 5 years ☐ 6 – 10 years ☐ 11 years and above
6. I have been exposed to foreigners in my own locality for  
☐ < 1 year ☐ 1 – 3 years ☐ 4 years and above
7. I have worked with someone from outside my own culture (Finland)  
☐ Yes (foreign students) ☐ Yes (Non-Students) ☐ No  
 If yes, proceed to 7a, 7b and 7c, otherwise, proceed to 8
- 7a. If yes (foreign students) their performance was ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair  
☐ Poor
- 7b. How long have you worked with someone outside your culture  
☐ < 1 year ☐ 1 – 3 years ☐ 4 years and above
- 7c. Do you get the same level of productivity as if you were working with someone as your own culture? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Do you think having a multicultural workplace at Keski Pohjanmaan Kirjapaino will be of any benefit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Do you think there could arise problems/conflicts if you work with someone outside your own culture? (You can tick one or more options)
- ☐ No   ☐ Language problems   ☐ Cultural conflicts   ☐ Misunderstandings
10. If and when Finland becomes more multicultural, would you like to work with someone outside your own culture?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
11. Are you interested in meeting and interacting with people from other cultures?
- ☐ Yes   ☐ No

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